

three to seven miles of the commercial shipping route between Singapore and Hongkong.

In the coconut-palm groves near the beach there are a few huts built by fishermen. The beach is of fine sand and washed by clear, deep blue water. These quiet surroundings were the scene of a tragic accident, when, in the middle of June, 1939, a French submarine did not return to the surface from a diving practice. All attempts to save the crew of nearly a hundred French officers and men were in vain.

We never wished for a prolonged stay at this beautiful bay. The lodging facilities in the little hamlet situated on the beach away from the road are exceedingly primitive, and the warm lemonade cannot be considered a refreshment in this very hot place.

ANNAMITES, FRENCHMEN—AND JAPANESE

From here to Saigon the road first passes through palm forests interspersed with great fertile rice-fields, a picture of immeasurable natural riches. Further south we drive for hours along the beautifully cool and shady asphalt road through the rubber plantations of

Cochin-China, where in parts the road is agreeably darkened by the high, closely planted rubber-trees, till we reach Saigon.

The entire coastal region we have passed through is densely inhabited. There is one village after another, and many Annamites, especially women in their characteristic pointed straw hats, can be seen working in the rice-fields and rubber plantations. So great are the throngs of people on the road that we had to buy an extra loud horn for our car, for with the standard one we could make no headway at all.

White people are rarely seen. Here and there in the villages there are small military posts, and even in the towns the number of Frenchmen is insignificant. It is usually composed of the highest French administrative official, the so-called Resident, with his assistants; the doctor; the hotel-proprietor; and the postal official.

Since the end of July things must have greatly changed along this coast, and especially in Cam Ranh Bay. An entirely new element appeared when this territory was occupied by thirty thousand Japanese soldiers and many units of the Japanese Navy.

IN SEARCH OF POMPEI

BY CATHERINE LENNARD

Dalat is a mountain station in French Indo-China, high and cool even in summer time. It is a favorite resort for the people of Saigon, although it stands in the very heart of the wild and hardly explored hill-country of the Mois. The Mois are nomads living in unattainable mountain regions. They have very little contact with civilization and are one of the savage tribes anthropologists like to study.

John had been quite ill and for his convalescence we had gone to Dalat. When he felt better, we decided to explore the countryside. According to rumors there existed a Moi village with the peculiar name of Pompei some 25 miles away, but it had not actually

been seen by anyone we knew. Although we had had no previous experience with expeditions, we decided to search for Pompei.

We were able to find out on which path to start, but no more. We could not ask the Mois, not knowing their language. Although one saw them mending the roads leading to Dalat, or wandering through the village on their way to the market place, where they barter their oranges and dwarf mountain orchids for other necessities, they never stay long enough in any one place for one to become acquainted with their customs. I had often seen them, walking along in single file, their black bodies doubled up under the weight of

the heavily laden baskets carried on their backs; a small squealing pig usually bringing up the rear, tugging at the piece of string tied around its neck.

We started out with some provisions, a raincoat, as the rainy season was about to start, a stout walking stick, a torch, and some cigarettes. We loaded all our kit on to the backs of a couple of tiny Moi ponies—smaller than any good sized donkey—sturdy and sure-footed for tricky mountain climbing. At times it was even possible to ride the ponies, although it necessitated sitting on a native saddle made of the hardest possible wood.

It was a bright sunny morning, tempered by a cool breeze. Soon the pine trees gave way to tropical jungle growth. A few hours of riding brought us to the top of a hill where the road forked and we were faced with the problem of which path to take. We tossed a coin and took the lower road. It seemed queer that we had not seen anyone since we started. If we had been on the right track, we should have met a few Mois coming from the opposite direction.

In the next valley we came upon a little river flowing rapidly over large boulders. We tied up the ponies. The midday sun was beating down on us and the pine trees and cool breeze of the morning seemed very remote. We swam and dried ourselves in the sun. The sound of a waterfall nearby reached our ears, mingled with the usual jungle noises—the jungle, that strange combination of intense stillness and palpitating invisible life. We fell asleep, but were soon awakened by the falling on our heads of large drops through the branches.

The rain, looking like large steel needles being thrown from the skies, came down with a violence that left us both breathless with surprise. The path had become a roaring torrent, gushing down from the hills, and we frequently lost it entirely as we struggled knee-deep through the undergrowth. A tickling in my toes made me think the rain

must have seeped into my boots, until I saw John's legs which were covered by a mass of small black leeches. We hurriedly searched for matches and cigarettes and, in spite of the rain, somehow managed to light them. Although John expressed a natural, and perhaps justifiable fear, that his legs would be burnt too, I held the burning cigarette end to each leech until it sizzled and dropped off.

The deluge stopped as suddenly as it had started, and we encountered a few Mois, coming along the path towards us. The men were short, with fine looking bodies, very well proportioned and muscular, and they carried their heads proudly. They wore loin cloths and dark blue embroidered jackets of handwoven coarse linen. The embroidery and fastenings were bright red. Their hair was long and done up in a kind of chignon on the top of the head. Some wore necklaces and bracelets of silver tubing. This jewellery is hand-made from melted coins. Others wore crude beads. The women were not as good-looking as the men. They were all naked to the waist and had long skirts wrapped round their loins. Many of them had cut the lobes of their ears and inserted circular pieces of wood, about three inches in diameter, into the opening. This gave the effect of enormous earrings. Men and women alike all smoked long thin bamboo pipes.

The Mois looked at us curiously, but when we smiled and offered them cigarettes, their suspicions were allayed. It was quite useless trying to talk, so I took out my note-book, and drawing a picture of a house, showed it to them. My efforts brought forth roars of laughter. "Show them the house and point in different directions," suggested John. This I did, with the result that they all pointed towards a small path that seemed to lead to the top of a mountain. When I uttered the word "Pompei" they laughed even louder. "That's all you will get out of them," said John. "We had better climb the mountain."

The sight of human life had given us a feeling of reassurance. But it began to rain again and we realized that a long wet spell had set in. By that time it was getting dark and chilly and the thought of tigers, panthers, and other wild beasts was with me constantly, though, having nearly reached our goal, I managed to suppress my fears.

Eventually we reached the summit. We eagerly searched for any signs of village life or cultivation, but we were to be disappointed. We decided to stay the night here—should any Mois pass by, we would see them. Also it seemed safer and drier here than in the hollow. John was still weak and went to sleep, while I kept watch with the lighted torch and a heavy walking-stick in my hands. In four hours' time he should take my place. It had turned cold. The matches were completely sodden and it was impossible to light a fire or a cigarette. The night was very dark.

Nothing exceptional occurred during my watch until a sudden peculiar sound, as of a deer calling to its mate, reached my ears. Something strange and slightly uncanny about this cry disturbed me. Then a vague form leapt across the path. There was no mistaking that agile grace—the two green lights that pierced the darkness of the night could never have been taken for the eyes of a deer. I heard a frantic neighing, followed by the mad galloping towards me of a terrified pony, and it was then that I realized with horror the disaster which had overtaken his companion. The pony and I clung to each other, united in terror. Only when I was reasonably sure that the shadowy form had disappeared down the valley—probably to quench his thirst after his excellent meal—I released the frightened beast.

Dawn was breaking and we were enthralled by the beauty of the rising sun creeping up through the mist that lay over the valley, when my joy was shattered by the sight of the disembowelled remains of the pony lying

waiting to be claimed when darkness should descend again.

We hastily retraced our steps the way we had come to find the spot where the road had forked and then to follow the upper path this time. The bright morning sunshine helped us to forget the experiences of the previous day and night. There was no difficulty in finding the fork, though it was hard going with only one pony which we took turns to ride. Finally we espied a small patch of maize and rice growing on a hilly slope ahead of us. Pompei, at last!

The thatched roof of an oblong native hut appeared on the horizon, and hungry dogs, looking more like wolves, came running, barking, to meet us. Native women and children stood shyly near the fence which encircled the tiny village, but most of the men were away, working or hunting. We approached the hut, and after we had indicated that we were hungry, thirsty, and tired, they led the way to the entrance and hospitably invited us to enter. The huts were made of dried earth stuck on to a frame of wooden rafters. The roof was of reed thatching. Our first impression on entering the hut was that everything looked black and smelt of wood smoke. The women squatted on the floor and indicated that we should make ourselves comfortable on the low wooden couch covered with filthy rags.

One of the women was moved by our exhausted appearance and pressed a horn full of bitter rice wine to our lips. It had been used by the entire family and was in need of a good scrubbing. We also ate queer cakes made from maize flour, some over-ripe black bananas and other strange food. The black shiny rafters above our heads were strung with a variety of utensils, such as hunting knives, drinking horns, home-made baskets of every size and shape, long pipes, quivers full of arrows, and the great heavy long-bows that the Mois use for hunting wild beasts—even tigers. All these objects were black with smoke and of a very primitive design.

We had been sleeping for some time when we were wakened by the sound of a horn being blown outside, hailing the home-coming of the male members of the family. They entered the hut—an old woman at their head. She was the Matriarch. The men being so seldom at home, the head of the tribe is a chieftainess, and all business transactions, such as buying or selling land and animals, have to pass through her hands.

As it was getting late we asked our chieftainess to lend us a pony and show us the way home. She appeared to understand and consented graciously upon receiving a gift of money, our remaining cigarettes, and some chewing-gum that we happened to have in

our pockets. Their child-like minds were much amused by a demonstration of how to manipulate the chewing-gum and they seemed to attach more value to this strange novelty than to the money. We left them playing gaily with the gum while the senior member of the tribe accompanied us to the entrance of the village. As we walked, he suddenly stopped and bowed down before a totem-pole; it was decorated with deers' antlers, wild buffalo horns, a strange looking beard that had probably belonged to a goat, and several wooden masks with primitively drawn faces on them.

We mounted our ponies and rode off, while behind us the jungle again swallowed up the little village of Pompei.

